U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
California Department of Water Resources

North Delta Improvements Project
Public Scoping Report

DRAFT 4/28/03
Date/Time: 6 to 9 p.m., February 19, 2003
Location: Jean Harvey Community Center
4273 River Road
Walnut Grove, Calif.

The following project team members were in attendance:

Curt Schmutte – DWR
Gwen Knittweis – DWR
Edward Schmidt – DWR
Tom Hall – DWR
Chris Kimball – DWR
Joel Dudas – DWR
Ed Schmit – DWR
James Martin – DWR
Collette Zemitis – DWR
Paul Bowers – USACE
Rebecca Wren – USACE
Bill Fleenor – UC Davis
Chris Hammersmark – UC Davis
Keith Whitener – The Nature Conservancy

Consultants:
Sam Garcia – Jones & Stokes
Don Trieu – MBK Engineers
Craig Moyle – Katz & Associates Inc.
Tamara White – Katz & Associates Inc.

Local Community Attendees

See Appendix C for scanned copies of original sign-in sheets. See Appendix B for documentation of public noticing.

Purpose

As part of its CEQA/NEPA compliance efforts, the North Delta Improvements Project program managers held two public meetings in February in Walnut Grove, Calif., and Sacramento, Calif. The purpose of the meetings was to receive comments from stakeholders and Agencies on well-integrated ecosystem restoration and flood control efforts in northern Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, principally on and around Staten Island, Dead Horse Island, and McCormack Williamson Tract in a manner that would benefit aquatic and terrestrial habitats and alleviate flood-related problems in the North Delta area. This report represents comments, ideas and concerns presented at the Walnut Grove meeting.

Overview

The meeting opened at 6 p.m. with an open house, providing attendees the opportunity to review project information boards and talk one-on-one with subject-matter experts. The public comment session convened at approximately 6:45 p.m. Curt Schmutte welcomed the audience and provided an overview of the North Delta Improvements Project, its challenges, progress to date, as well as introduction of team members. Gwen Knittweis provided an overview of proposed North Delta Flood Control and Ecosystem Restoration Improvements

with assistance of a PowerPoint presentation. Ms. Knittweis's presentation stated the reason for the meeting, and gave a brief description of each work station. Work stations included flood control, ecosystem restoration, hydrology, hydraulic modeling, recreation, land use, and a general project overview. Project components such as flood impact, ecosystem restoration, and proposed solutions were also examined. The meeting was facilitated by Craig Moyle. The meeting was adjourned at 8 p.m. Oral comments were recorded on computer by Tamara White. Written comments were provided by attendees on personal letter stock, public comment cards provided at the meeting, or on flip charts stationed near information booths.

Summary of Key Issues Discussed

Six issues and concerns were most frequently expressed during the meeting. Flooding was the most common comment/concern (9 comments/questions were expressed regarding flooding). The remaining five most expressed comments included, environment (8), dredging the river (7), finances (4), project time line (4), and sustaining the region's agriculture base (3). Listed below is a chronological account of public comments. See Appendix A for copies of all written comments received by the North Delta Flood Control and Ecosystem Restoration Improvements Project.

Flooding
- Single/Double Surge Protection (3)
- 100 year flood Protection (2)
- Threatens areas economic vitality
- Flood four islands
- 1986
- 1997

Environment
- Community standpoint
- Description of 'old delta'
- Disruption of dredging
- Nature of levee
- Environmental groups
- Money

Dredging
- Key in sustaining channel capacity (2)
- Beneficial reuse of dredge material
- Dredge delta sentiment is not polluted
- Channel has historically been dredged
- Urban areas in Northern California receive better maintaince, which allows dredging
- Will not harm the environment

Finances
- Cost benefit ration
- Congressional funding
- Economic impact of project on agriculture
- Project budget

Project Time Line
- Concern that more time is needed to work with engineers
- No definitive time line
- Concern that timeline is not definitive enough (2)

Sustaining regions agricultural base
- Agricultural base must be maintained
- Recreation and habitat must be maintained
- Enhancing of habitat should be done on publicly owned land

Public Comment Session

Facilitator: Asked for a show of hands regarding the number of growers attending. Of those attending:

- Approximately 75 percent were row and field crop growers
- Approximately 25 percent were permanent crop growers

Question – Attendee 1

Why is the Army Corps of Engineers involved in this project?

Answer – Paul Bowers

It takes a lot of people with different types of knowledge to get a project of this size started. We also would like community involvement to help formulate alternatives.

Statement – Christopher Lee, grower/ attorney

The staff assigned to NDIP must speak to community leaders such as Tim Wilson, John Beronick, Walt Hoppe, Topper Van Loben Sels and Steve Mello. These men know the land and understand the issues that will face the project and have solutions that will work.

Question – Topper Van Loben Sels

Will these projects give 100 year single surge protection? Double surge protection? Engineers need to look at these issues. Do we have more time to work with engineering firms to look at more than just the 1997 single surge flood?

Answer – Curt Schmutte

Yes, our goal is to address the issue properly. We do not have a definite time line.

Statement – Tom Herzug, Reclamation District 118

We must look at upstream dams. If you want to provide a solution that will give 100 year flood protection this is a great reference point to start at. These projects will give North East Delta meaningful flood protection if modeled correctly. We need to look to the 1986 flood to have a correct, working model. The water should be spread over area. No matter what will have to take into account upstream development taking away flood bypass areas.

Statement – Steve Jessett

There is definitely a dredging component, if you have a river that does not have the capacity it did 50 years ago. Short of channel capacity, the situation is getting worse. We need to look at sustainable ways to handle the problem. Dredging will be key either way. Look at the beneficial reuses of dredge material; permanent banks in farm areas, reduces soil oxidation. We must look at economic alternatives, what is the best cost benefit ratio? Speak to the five men mentioned earlier and they can provide insight in this area.

Response to Jessett – Curt Schmutte

What would community like from an environmental standpoint? What type of environmental restoration?

Response to Schmutte – Steve Jessett

The old delta flooded in winter and spring, during the summer it would dry up. During that time farm waste was dumped in the river, and the fish thrived. Keeping water high in levees now creates problems. We can't spray the wetlands and we must be careful in approach, to prevent the spread of new strains of encephalitis.

Response to Schmutte – Attendee 2

The reason salmon don't go down the river like they used to, is because the rivers silted up. Sand hill cranes love cattle fields. Somewhere the concept was instituted that the farmers don't know what's going on, and staff does. We don't put pesticides on crops because we think its fun. We don't like doing it, it's a hassle, it's expensive and we have to get permits to spray. We put as little on as possible. You all drove up here today; you say how beautiful it is. What we want is to continue to maintain the beauty of the area. Every 20 years a flood threatens economic vitality of the area. Local people are the most invested in this area and are the greatest form of input, use them.

Response to Schmutte – Steve Jessett

In terms of dredging, urban areas of Northern California are in the same boat as we are. However, their levees protect urban areas, which seem to be more of a priority. Dredge delta sentiment is assumed to be polluted…this is wrong. Throughout history we've dredged the channel. That material is clean. We can throw it over the side, to create habitat. Dredged channels transport water better than plugged up channels.

Question – Attendee 3

What is the reasoning behind not allowing us to dredge?

Answer – Paul Bowers

The reasoning behind not dredging is that it disrupts habitat, disrupts the fish, disrupt animals that fish eat, and pesticides pollute the soil….

Response to Bowers – Attendee 3

That is false. It is a matter of 1-2 years that a levee will be back to nature. The underbrush will grow back in. The water habitat will be disrupted but the delta will be back to normal in days. Our levees are sedimentary in nature. Setting levees back would be an engineering nightmare. Place inundated would have mercury. If an island in the delta flooded, there would be no habitat values other than fish species.

Statement/Question – Curt Schmutte

We must identify the biggest problems first. Consider what environmental groups will accept. These are complex issues; however we do have the right people involved in order to create a project that everyone can buy into. After that we will take the plan to Congress to get funding. My questions at this point are what is the position of growers regarding restoration, or combinations of it?

Response – Attendee 4

If you're going to enhance habitat do it on publicly owned land. The economic impact must be considered. One of the long term goals is that we have to maintain agriculture. We must maintain our recreational base, and habitat. Yet we do have a tremendous resource, about 17% of the land here is publicly owned.

Question – Attendee 5

In terms of budget how much are we talking about realistically?

Response – Gwen Knittweis

It is hard to determine the budget until we have refined the proposed project alternatives and can make we detailed cost estimates. CALFED has been the recipient of large sums of funding. We may get some bond funds We may get funds through CALFED arrangements or project sharing

Statement – Attendee 6

This has been a project needed until 1986. We don't need to study this anymore. We already know we won't get money out of Sacramento County. Before investing more time, please answer the question; are we going to study for 5 more years, or do something?

Statement – Attendee 7

All big reclamation districts have engineering groups. These are a very valuable resource.

Statement – Attendee 8

There is concern that nothing is different. Action has been going on since 1948. We want something definitive to happen.

Statement – Curt Schmutte

We want to do adaptive management. We may want to start building and see how the structures work. We will monitor those structures, and either continue to build or not. We need to look at the schedule from state and federal perspective, and really push ACOE to move the project along. We're looking to finalize the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) draft by summer, and to have the final by fall of 2004.

Statement – Attendee 9

CALFED said the ultimate goal was to transfer water down south. Most money has been spent on the environmental projects, and not water projects. Let's get a water project going and finished.

Response – Curt Schmutte

True, we're trying to think outside the box to do some building.

Written comments:

No public comment cards received at the Walnut Grove meeting.

Anonymous public comments recorded on flip charts at the Walnut Grove meeting included:

"Take the four islands; Bouldin, Webb Tract, Baron, and Holland Tract, and flood during winter and spring floods. That's the quickest storage in the area available right now."

"Consider setting back levees on Dead Horse, Causeway on Staten northern tip."

"Dredge the south fork."

"Forget buying land, dredge the channels!"

"Dredging should be part of all alternatives. Levee setbacks, lower water surface elevations during low flow rendering siphons inoperable, pump bowls to high."*

"You have to realize that we want to maintain our agriculture base. Is agriculture part of the restoration system?"

"Funding for conservation easements needed."

"Seepage can affect surrounding properties and need to be monitored. The quality and the quantity of the water will leave the Delta. We deserve to keep our quality and quantity of water. Upstream development needs to be addressed. They need to mitigate their impact."

*Pump Bowl descriptions:
When pump bowls are set high it prevents the water level from lowering. The level at which the bowl is set is very important as it controls water level. If the bowl is to high it costs energy and sucks air, to shallow it may suck sand.- **Jack Williams, Farm Advisor, UC Davis**
If a centrifugal pump is located on the top of the levee and the water level in the river becomes too low, the pump location may be too high above the water surface to provide sufficient suction to lift the water from the river surface to the pump intake. An excessive elevation difference can cause cavitation and reduce or stop the water flow. If a turbine pump is used (bowels of turbine pumps are submerged in the river), the elevation of a reduced water surface elevation may be below the elevation of the pump intake. **– Blaine Hanson, Irrigation and Drainage Specialist, UC Davis**